

## Halloween? It's true origin and meaning

Have you been caught in the web?

Halloween--This is the night before All Saint's Day. All Saint's Day, November 1, has been celebrated for centuries as a day to honor the saints of the church. The mass said by the Catholic church on that day was known as Allhallowmas. Halloween falls on Oct. 31. This date is also the most important of the four major holidays of witchcraft and announces the termination of summer and the onset of winter.

Popularly we all know that Halloween is a night when children, and some not so childlike, go from door to door begging for food and committing pranks if their request is not honored with something they like. It has become a custom and a cultural celebration throughout most American homes, schools, and churches to celebrate Halloween in some fashion. Within the last few years the trend has been toward having a party, particularly among the churches, because of the amount of vandalism, maliciousness, and actual evil that has been prevalent. Who hasn't read horror stories in the newspapers at that time of year of the children coming home with a razor blade in their apple or a hallucinogenic drug in their candy? And these received from a supposedly "nice" neighbor? Knowing the background of this celebration throws quite a bit of light on this subject.

It is interesting that the ceremonies for honoring the dead in the Fall of the year, Oct. or Nov., were known to all ancient cultures. The Assyrians, Hindus, Persians, Chinese, American Indians, natives of the islands of the South Seas, as well as the British, Irish, Scots, etc., all believed that this was "the time of ghosts" as the dwellers in what is now Britain called it. In Genesis, chapters 6 through 8, we read the story of Noah's ark and how God saved just 8 people, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, out of the entire world because Noah was righteous before Him and how the rest of the population was wicked and was destroyed. This occurrence was undoubtedly perverted and survived throughout the rest of the peoples of the world as stories of ghosts, the dead returning, etc. Traditions of such similarity all over the world could not be merely coincidental. Genesis 7:11 tells us that the storm started on the "17th day of the second month." The Jewish new year begins some place near the middle of September. Thus the deluge would have occurred at the end of October or the beginning of November.

The Halloween customs prevalent in this country come to us largely from the Irish and Scots. From all that we can determine now, it looks as if the celebration came right along with the large influx of Irish that came to this country in the middle to the end of the 19th century. The early residents of the British Isles, the Celts, as well as the people of France, Germany and Scandinavia, were pagans with the same gods that the Greeks and Romans worshipped, only with different names. Their priests were known as Druids and were much respected by the people. The Druids were not only the priests, but the teachers of both children and adults, the prophets, the judges, the philosophers. They had complete control over the people. Their heathen ceremonies often included sacrificial burning of not only animals, but of people as well, to appease their gods. We know little of their rites because those involved were sworn to secrecy. It is interesting that one of their most sacred times was at midnight, often called the witching hour.

The festival which the Druids held in the Fall, on the day corresponding to our October 31, was called Samhain (SAH win or summer's end). Samhain was also the name of the "Lord (god) of the Dead."(2)

The Celts were the ones who chose the date of October 31 as the date of their new year. The celebration which they had at this time was the celebration of every evil and wicked thing in the world, as well as the celebration and worship of the dead. They believed that the spirits of those who had died during the previous 12 months came out on that day, together with witches, elves,

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fairies, etc., to return to their former homes to be entertained by the living. Huge bonfires were set on hilltops and in villages and sacrifices were made to keep these evil spirits away.

An early belief among all peoples of the earth was that the souls of good men were taken by good spirits to a certain place, called by some paradise, but that the souls of the wicked were left to wander some place between the earth and the heavens. The jack-o-lantern came from this belief. Jack was supposed to have been one of these doomed souls and, not being able to get into either heaven or hell, was doomed to wander until Judgment Day trying to get into one or the other. The pumpkin face came from the fact that he supposedly put a burning coal into a turnip in order to try to outwit the devil and keep from going to hell. The lighted pumpkin face, jack-o-lantern, is the ancient symbol for a damned soul.<sup>(3)</sup> It was used to attempt to frighten the evil spirits away and thus the effort to make the most hideous face possible.

Among other customs that have grown out of Celtic practices is the custom of "trick or treating." Irish farmers, on their way to the village festival honoring Samhain, would stop at the doors of those they passed to obtain food for their trip. If they were given food and it met with their approval, then the home from which they had received it would have good luck. If they were refused food or were not happy with what they had received, then they cursed and threatened those that had refused them.

The wearing of masks and costumes originated from these people also. They would gather around their bonfires to offer their crops, animals, and sometimes themselves as sacrifices to their gods. Often they would wear the skins and heads of these animals and while doing so would tell the fortunes of their friends and neighbors for the coming year. Fall was considered the most favorable time of the year for divination concerning marriage, health luck and death. October 31 was the one day of the year where the help of the devil was actively sought in these pursuits.

The black cat became associated with Halloween because the ancients thought they were sacred. They believed that cats had once been humans who had changed into animals because of evil deeds that they had committed. Since this heathen religion is identical with witchcraft, witches on broomsticks were a natural outgrowth.

Although the Romans conquered the Gauls in about 43 A.D., it was not their practice to interfere with the customs of their conquered lands. In the case of the Celtic new year, the only change they made was the addition of a ceremony to honor the Roman goddess of fruit and trees. It is from this ceremony that we derive our present custom of bobbing for apples, which these pagan people believed to be used to divine the future.

While the Druids were having their festivals in Gaul and Britain, the Romans were worshipping their false gods in Rome under different names. About 100 A.D., the Pantheon was built in Rome to worship the goddess, Cybele, and other heathen deities. The Romans would come to this temple to pray for the dead as well as to worship. Rome fell to the barbarians later and this temple was allowed to decay, but in 607 A.D., it was recaptured by the Roman Emperor Phocas who gave it to the Pope, Boniface, as a gift. The Pope, in accordance with the policy of the church, both then and later, took the temple and consecrated it to the Virgin Mary and other saints.

It was the Church's policy that when they took over a heathen people, if there was a celebration scheduled for a certain time of the year, the Church would allow the celebration to continue and would only change the names of those being honored. So now instead of honoring the pagan gods and goddesses, the people were honoring the Virgin Mary and other saints. This was the so-called "Christianizing" of these pagan peoples. The Romans had had their ceremony for their goddess in May. For two centuries, therefore, until 834 A.D., All Saints Day was held in May. Then with the conquering of the Germanic and Scandinavian people, it was changed to November 1 to coincide with their New Year festival. By this move the Pope accommodated the people of Britain

and Gaul. This practice has continued in the Catholic church, to its detriment. People are not converted by proclamation, but only by a heart changed by acceptance of the Son of God, Christ Jesus, as their personal Lord and Savior.

Modern additions to this demonic celebration are the use of the colors, red, black, and orange, traditionally colors associated with the devil, and the use of crepe paper streamers, etc. An idea from the Good Housekeeping Book of Entertainment shows how deceived many people can become by following current practices: "...if you would like to have something less usual, you could make a giant spider web with black and orange strings, or in narrow strips of crepe paper coming from the four corners of the room, complete with a large spider-one of the devil's followers." God has a better idea. Reject all activities associated in any way with Satanism.

Witchcraft is the religion closely associated with Halloween. Most of these customs mentioned as things related to Halloween are of witchcraft. Many people think that witchcraft is just a name, that people really don't do these things seriously. Witchcraft has existed, however, since before Christians lately has had a great resurgence. Those who practice witchcraft believe in the "old religion", as they call it. It is a nature cult with belief in fertility rites which often show up as acts of sex. This is particularly true at the initiation of a new member into a coven.

A coven is a localized type of cell group of witches. Each coven consists of 12 people and a high priest or high priestess. (There is a reason for the 12 under a high priest[ess]. This is a mockery of Jesus, referred to as the High Priest, and his 12 disciples. This is also the reasoning for the use of the number 3 in the occult as it is a mockery of the Trinity. For example, a spiritualist medium will often have a person repeat a Psalm 3 times a day for 3 days; or he (or she) may light 3 candles before a seance.) Jesus' name is widely accepted in the occult as he is considered to have been the greatest medium and magician to have ever lived. These covens usually meet once a week, but that may vary depending upon the leader. Three big festivals have already been mentioned, of which the most important is October 31.

They have different gods and goddesses, but they are identical with the early Greek and Roman gods and goddesses no matter what names they go by. Lucifer is one of the main gods but is not considered evil; rather, he is the most beautiful and intelligent of the gods. He is also called Pan. Diana (or Artemis) is probably the most important goddess and also takes different forms. She is the goddess of the chase and the fertility goddess. Witches become very upset if they are classed as Satanists. They claim that they do not harm anyone but Satanists do. There is considerable overlapping, however, since both really worship Lucifer. There really is no such thing as a white, or good, witch, according to the Bible. Anyone who practices witchcraft is condemned. Exodus 22:18 says, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."

To show that it does not consider witchcraft a joke, The United States government has granted tax exemption as a church, to the Church of Wicca (Seekers of Wisdom). Many young people, particularly, become involved with witchcraft and Satanism seeking a thrill. Be assured, it is no game and once involved, it is not easy to get out of.

For those of our readers who consider themselves either Jewish or Christian, there is a special warning from God. You are strictly forbidden to have anything to do with the occult. You may consider it only as a joke, but God doesn't. This is the High Holy Day in witchcraft and you are to have no part in it whatever. In Deuteronomy 18:9-12, God forbids all such pagan customs and worship:

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt no learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you one that maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a

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necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD; and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee."

There is no real treat to Halloween, and you might find yourself tricked by it instead. God's treat for us is a wonderful plan for our lives. We will summarize this plan in the following steps.

1. God loves us. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

2. Each one of us is a sinner, and therefore separated from God. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.

3. Jesus Christ is the only one to whom we can come for salvation and eternal life. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." John 14:6.

4. Each one of us must accept Jesus personally into our lives as not only our Savior, but our Lord. When we have done this, we have eternal life. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12. "But if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17:3.

You can receive Jesus Christ right now--through prayer. Just talk to God in your own way. God sees right into our hearts and knows our every thought. We do not have to talk to Him in fancy words. Confess your sins to Him, ask for forgiveness, and then ask Him to come in and live in your heart. According to His word, He will do that and live with you forever. What better treat could anyone receive than the peace and joy that accepting Jesus Christ into our hearts brings? There is nothing that can surpass it. Now call someone and share what Jesus has done for you.

(1) *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*

(2) *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1956 edition, pg. 3245

(3) *The Truth About Halloween*, by Robert McCurry, The Temple Times, 2560 Sylvan Rd, East Point, GA 30344, Oct. 23, 1977

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